

United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Categorical Exclusion Not Established By Statute
DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0038-CX

August 2014

Dolores County - Slick Rock Gravel Pit Sampling

Location:

~500 feet east of State Highway 141,
~1/2 Mile due west of the bridge over the Dolores River
Slick Rock, San Miguel Co.

T44N, R18W, Sec 31, NW1/4SE1/4

Applicant/Address:

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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION FORMAT WHEN USING CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS NOT ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE

A. Background

BLM Office: Tres Rios Field Office Lease/Serial/Case File No: COC-76684

Proposed Action Title/Type: Sand and Gravel Sampling

Location of Proposed Action:

Approximately 500 feet east of State Highway 141, 1/2 Mile due west of the highway bridge over the Dolores River. Near the former town of Slick Rock in San Miguel Co. Note that the project proponent is Dolores County, but the proposal is in San Miguel County. The legal description is *T44N, R18W, Sec 31, NW1/4SE1/4*, within an area of less than 5 acres. Proposed total disturbance would be < 0.2 acres.

Description of Proposed Action:

The project would be sampling sand and gravel in an abandoned gravel pit located on Highway 141, ~1/2 mile south of Slick Rock. An estimated up to 30 holes will be excavated using a back hoe or tracked excavator to determine the depth to bedrock in several locations to determine whether enough sand and gravel remains on the site to consider issuing a Free Use Permit to Dolores County.

Note - This cx does not evaluate authorizing a gravel pit – only sampling – additional analysis would be done for authorizing any production.

The site is an existing abandoned gravel pit located in Pinion-Juniper-Sage landscape type. It has been reclaimed naturally and has abundant needle and thread grass, and some mature sage, however the site is also a popular area for dispersed camping, ATV riding, shooting, etc, so there are a lot of tracks and trails.

The holes would only be as large as needed to determine the thickness of gravel at each location, up to the maximum reach of the excavator, for the purposes of calculation that would be 5'W x 12'L x 12'D. Disturbance area would be ~ 240 ft² per hole (area of the hole + 3x for the pile of excavated material and footprint of the machine). Maximum disturbance is estimated to be 7200 ft² (0.17 acres). It is likely that the actual disturbance would be less.

When excavation is complete, the hole would be described, and the depth to bedrock or refusal would be measured. Each hole would be backfilled after excavation is was completed, and re-seeded using an appropriate reclamation seed mix. A bulk sample several yards (i.e. 1 truck load) may be taken for testing purposes, if needed.

It is estimated that it would take up to 5 days to complete the project, however days may not be consecutive, so the project could take up to two weeks.

Equipment may stay on site during that time, but fuel would be stored in a mobile container (e.g. a tank in a truck, etc).

No trees would be cut. Areas where potential cultural resources have been identified would be avoided.

The operator would follow all conditions of approval to protect cultural resource values laid out in the Cultural Resources Action Memorandum .

If, as a result of the sampling, it is determined that there is adequate gravel to resume operations at this site, additional NEPA analysis would be done to determine the impacts that would result from development of a gravel pit.

The site is in Quaternary Alluvium. No paleontological resources were observed on the surface. If paleontological resources are encountered (i.e. Mammoth or other Pleistocene Mega Fauna) bones are encountered during excavation, the operator will stop excavating in that location, leave the hole open, and contact BLM.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: _San Juan/San Miguel RMP Date Approved/Amended: September 1985

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

The proposed project is on land bordering emphasis areas A and C. (see attached map)

Emphasis area A is "Emphasis on Livestock Management" and provides the following guidance for minerals: *"Allow mineral development in all areas not withdrawn from entry. Provide protective stipulations to limit impacts to livestock improvements or management practices."*(p.27).

Emphasis area C is "Emphasis on Recreation" and provides the following guidance for minerals: *Manage mineral development to limit conflict with high recreational values. When Possible, schedule activities so conflicts are minimized between recreational and mineral activities. Ensure site rehabilitation activities follow operating plans and address recreation management activities.* (p. 36)

Additionally, it is part of the Dolores River Canyon SRMA: *"Manage the river from Disappointment Creek to Gypsum Valley Bridge for its rural setting opportunities"* (p.14)

The proposed activity is consistent with objectives for Emphasis area A. The amount of forage removed for livestock grazing would be negligible, and no livestock improvements would be impacted by the proposed action (gravel sampling).

The proposed activity is consistent with the objectives for Emphasis area C. The area is sometimes used for dispersed camping and ATV use. The sampling activity would create noise that may make camping less pleasant, and might discourage camping all together during the two weeks of operations. ATVs would need to stay a safe distance from the equipment, but would otherwise operate unimpeded. It is also consistent with "rural setting opportunities".

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with:

H-1790-1-National Environmental Policy Act Handbook—(Public), Appendix 4, F #10 at 152: "Disposal of mineral materials, such as sand, stone, gravel, pumice, cinders and clay, in amounts not exceeding 50,000 cubic yards or disturbing more than 5 acres, except in riparian areas".

The proposed action meets all of these criteria.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR Part 46.215 apply.

The proposed action (see the project description) incorporates mitigation measures for wildlife, paleontological, and cultural resources that will prevent any impacts. Because of this, it will not have any significant impacts.

D: Signature

Authorizing Official:  Date: 9-11-14
Connie Clementson
Field Manager

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact

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Attachments

Map (1 pp.)
Photograph of Site

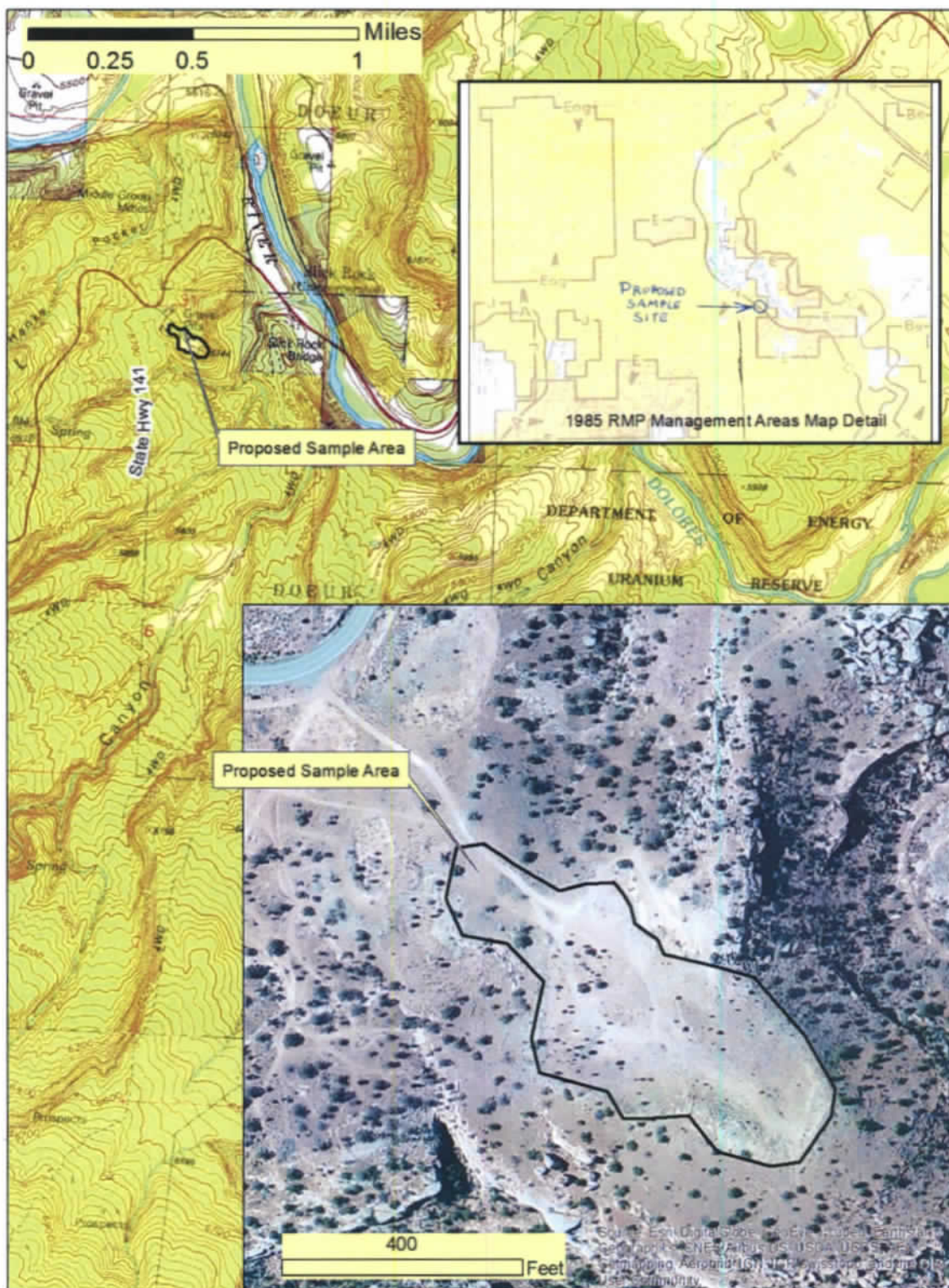


Figure 1: ~ 1:24,000 Scale Map of the project area showing Land Status (BLM=Yellow, Private = Colorless); Aerial photography close-up of project area (inset 1) and Land Use Plan Conformance Map from 1985 RMP (Inset 2)



Figure 2: Picture of Sample Area Looking Northeast from near the road.

Categorical Exclusion Review Record
Extraordinary Circumstance to Categorical Exclusions

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:

Extraordinary Circumstances	
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.	
No	<i>The project be of limited duration and would not increase traffic on any highways. Population in the area is sparse, and holes filled back in immediately.</i>
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	
No	<i>Not present.</i>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].	
No	<i>The area was already used as a gravel pit.</i>
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	
No	<i>The effects are well understood and would be very limited and of short time frame.</i>
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	
No	<i>Any gravel production which might result would have to be analyzed fully under separate NEPA</i>
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	
No	<i>Any gravel production which might result would have to be analyzed fully under separate NEPA</i>
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.	
No	<i>See cultural resources action memorandum</i>
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	

Extraordinary Circumstances	
No	No Threatened or Endangered species were identified at this site.
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	
No	Proposed action is set up to avoid violations of law.
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	
No	The project is in a remote area and would have limited impacts to anybody, including low income and minority populations. If a gravel pit were to open, it would have a positive impact on low income populations, as it would reduce the cost to Dolores County to maintain roads and bridges in a poor, rural area.
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).	
No	None Identified. Full consultation would be done if, as a result of this very limited exploration, mining operations were to be re-authorized at this site.
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).	
No	The area will be monitored and treated for weeds if they are identified as a result of this project.